

Hey, we're continuing a series about marketing—today bringing a wide-ranging discussion. That's because we're talking about *bundling*! So, here's a definition of that from the Cambridge English Dictionary: bundling is "the act of selling several products or services together." And you know a whole lot about that...but not necessarily how truly pervasive bundling is in our everyday lives. Let's take a look at all that!

Naturally, we think first about bundling as it relates to modern consumer marketing. So, what about "BOGO," you know, "buy one and get one free," when you buy one garment and get another for no additional cost? Now even if the first item may be priced a bit high in the marketplace, that bundling is powerful where the consumer can be led to feel that they are getting something for free—yeah, that second item. That's one of the most powerful strategies in the consuming world...priced at "free!" And BOGO strategies often allow the individual consumer enticing flexibility with a range of options or styles.

But bundling's not even remotely limited to pricing like BOGO. So, how about cars? Henry Ford's Model T dominated in some of the early years of the American auto industry, and, as a pioneer of efficiency and low cost in building cars, Ford thought in terms of "sales," not real "marketing" focusing on the consumer's deeper desires. In fact, Ford was famous for saying, "Any customer can have a car painted any color that he wants, so long as it is black." Well, that's pretty much ancient thinking from our perspective, isn't it?

But then General Motors broke open the car marketplace with a much more consumer-sensitive type of thinking. So what's that mean? Well, for example, Chevrolet, a division of General Motors, offered a radio with their cars in the 1920s, that time when radio was profoundly altering people's lives in stationary venues like their homes. Were these radios that very primitive? Yeah. Very bulky? Yeah. But adding radios *was* bundling, effective bundling! And General Motors never looked back, introducing and bundling basic features with all sorts of add-ons like radios! In fact, GM became known for its own slogan: "a car for every purse and purpose." And, ultimately, Ford had to follow with that thinking...or lose numerous sales.

Nowadays, the use of bundling is pervasive and never-ending in consumer-saturated societies, with companies trying to trump their competitors with disruptive...then sustainable...bundling. Truth be told, bundled purchases are almost unavoidable for the typical consumer in a place like America...you know...

Like purchasing a household appliance with a warranty for free repairs and service for a three-year period—yes, that's the product *and* warranty *bundled together* to attract consumers buying, say, an ordinary dishwasher. That type of deal was innovative years ago—but now it's standard...actually routine!

And how about that #3 combo meal at your favorite fast-food hamburger joint? Sure, you could buy just a quarter-pound baconburger...or you could buy just an order of fries...or you could buy just a soft drink. Or you can buy all three in a bundle for a price quite a bit lower than buying those three items separately! Maybe you just wanted that special baconburger, but when you see the combo meal is just a bit more money than the burger alone, you go for it! That's bundling in everyday life—a match made in hamburger heaven for you and for the hamburger joint that sold more to you than they would have without bundling.

In fact, a few years before inflation kicked in during the post-COVID era, a drive through McDonald's proudly let you buy a simple, basic cheeseburger for a buck...just one dollar. Nothing fancy-schmacy there, much more simple and cheap than a meat-layered Big Mac with all that special sauce and the rest of those tasty condiments. But then, suddenly it seemed, that basic cheeseburger was no longer offered as a solo buy for a small, pre-inflation price—if you wanted it, you *had* to buy it with a small order of fries for quite a bit more money. And what did McDonald's label that offer? A "bundle," of course! 'Course, you could still buy a solo Big Mac...but that Big Mac alone cost a couple bucks more than that basic cheeseburger bundle! Yep, that's free markets, ever evolving, catering to divergent tastes—using bundling as a strategy!

Then how about cosmetic counters at elite department stores? For years, the shopper could get, say, an elegantly-marketed and packaged mascara tube for a pretty high price. But wait, the store had a whole

goodie-bag chock full of other really cool beauty aids for “free,” of course! And the consumer walks away feeling pretty darn smart, a profitable marketing “win” for everyone involved!

But all this bundling has now really gotten complex...and we often take really deep complexity for granted. When you got your most recent laptop, was Microsoft 365 already loaded on it? Well, that’s a clear case of bundling hardware, software, *and* online services! And within that full Microsoft 365 package nowadays, you get what used to be called the “Microsoft Office” bundle of software, you know, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and so on. So, there we have it...a software bundle within the laptop bundle! Nowadays, we wouldn’t even think of not having that—in fact, we would complain if it were taken away!

And how about an iPhone...you know, the one that’s essentially a platform with all the apps you can bundle right on the interface of that physical phone? Amazing! And taken for granted now, too.

So we find bundling everywhere in our lives, often without even realizing the depth of the bundling and its reach! How about Amazon Prime, where, for an annual fee, the company offers video services like movies and original programming that’re available everywhere there’s Wi-Fi...and Amazon bundles *that* with other offers, like special, faster, often-free deliveries of physical products like shampoo and books? And Amazon extends the offer of free delivery of physical products further when a Prime member chooses to buy multiple products into one bundled delivery to their doorstep—or their mother’s house in Dallas!

Here’s a startling realization. The last several years, streaming services like Netflix and Hulu hammered traditional cable TV services by *unbundling* away from too many undesired channels that cable firms had bundled together for too high of a price—they created narrower, targeted services. But now, those very companies who unseated cable TV are now looking to re-bundle some with competitors! How about that?

Yes, bundling now goes far beyond your traditional BOGO! But, in the big picture of effective bundling, there’s truly one bundling service that stands above every other. This bundling experience for the astute consumer was, is, and always will be above and beyond anything else ever offered.

And that bundled offer is through the Cross—Christ and Him crucified—indeed, the amazing bundle of offers to sinners that are embedded in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus. So, how about those benefits, all bundled together and accepted by the person who believes in Christ? Listen closely—I’m going to list them succinctly so that we can reflect on ten unique, integrated benefits of the Cross-bundle.

1. The believer’s customized deliverance from the penalty of personal sins
2. The believer’s personal salvation
3. Eternal life for the believer
4. The believer’s eternal fellowship with the Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
5. The believer’s sins removed...as far as the East is from the West
6. The joy of communal worship of the Lamb of God for eternity
7. Here and now, the believer’s experience and everyday access to God’s grace and peace
8. The believer’s opportunity to share the Gospel experience and reality to the whole world
9. The believer’s privilege of prayers offered...and the realization of prayers answered
10. The believer’s abundant life in Christ today and every day until the believer is taken to heaven

What a bundle of truly awesome benefits for belief in Jesus...benefits both eternal and for the here and now! And this list could go on and on with bundled benefits we haven’t even mentioned yet! The truth is, God created and packaged bundling with the greatest offers ever made! And that was effected by Christ’s finished work on the Cross. That’s *real* bundling! So, the Kingdom bundled way before Chevrolet and Microsoft and Amazon...and established it all for eternity! Surprised? Me either. Because it’s God Way.

A&A: Application & Action

1. Stop and linger...ponder and wonder...at the list of the utterly unique, bundled benefits of the believer responding to the Cross in faith. Then nudge someone nearby or call someone and share the amazing offers given to whosoever would call upon the name of Jesus.

2. As the local manifestation of the Body of Christ, does your church clearly explain and exhort the full bundle of benefits and believers' role in proclaiming them? Give examples of your church doing so.

3. How well does your business or nonprofit workplace bundle its key product or service offerings—especially in context of its most daunting or emerging competitors? Discuss.